January 1935, that France would not stand in his way, Mussolini turned to England, a signatory of the treaties of 1906 and 1925 by which England, France and Italy defined their economic interests and aspirations in Abyssinia. On January 29 the Italian Charge suggested an exchange of views, but the proposal was neither accepted nor declined. A word of warning at this stage might possibly have turned the Duce's mind towards a compromise. An 'inter-departmental Committee under Sir John Maffey, Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies, reported in June that we had no important interests except the waters of the Blue Nile and that no vital interests necessitated resistance to an Italian conquest. Without waiting for an official indication of cur attitude, Mussolini began to despatch troops to Eritrea in February. Here was a second opportunity to inquire as to Italian aims and if necessary to protest; but the Foreign Secretary merely communicated to Parliament the Italian falsehood that the mobilization of two divisions in no way implied war-like intentions. A third occasion for a warning was neglected at the Stresa Conference in April. The Duce's consent to refer the clash at Walwal to arbitration provided a formal excuse for silence, but the real reason was our fear that opposition would drive him into Hitler's arms. The same motive operated in the Anglo-French refusal to support Abyssinia's requests that the League should deal with the Italian threat. At this point Austen Chamberlain, who was called in unofficially as a *persona grata,* warned the Italian Ambassador that an attack on Abyssinia would have a deplorable effect on Anglo-Italian relations and encourage Germany to aggress. Grand! appeared to agree, but held out no hope that Mussolini would draw back. Our

studied silence
at a time when the coming campaign was the talk of the world
was more eloquent than words. That British public opinion
might assert itself never occurred to the Duce, and indeed the
widespread support for the principle of economic sanctions
revealed in the Peace Ballot, organized by the League of Nations
Union, came as a surprise to the Cabinet. By this time, how-
ever, Mussolini had gone too far to retreat.

So far from our coveting Abyssinia, as Italians were taught
to believe, the Government despatched Mr. Eden with an oUve
branch to Rome. The Emperor, it was suggested, might
present Italy with part of the Ogaden province and receive in
compensation a strip of British Somaliland with access to the
sea at Zeila, England would also urge Abyssinia to sanction